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Winter storm takes aim on Midwest; Mid-Atlantic next



Traffic slows around crashes on I-90 as a storm packing wind, ice pellets, snow and lightning rolls through Billings Sunday afternoon.

CHICAGO - Two powerful winter storms blanketed huge swaths of the central United States yesterday and threatened to bury much of the northern portion of the country in the coming days.

Sunday, Calgary, Alberta, received about a foot of snow from the storm.

The storm will then head east, spreading heavy snow by Wednesday in the Appalachian mountains of West Virginia, and Virginia, reports Weather Channel. The snow will be heavy and wet, which, along

with high winds, could lead to power outages.

The storm could bring significant snow to Washington D.C. and Baltimore metro areas, along with coastal flooding along the East Coast later Wednesday into Thursday.

It will likely be the heaviest snowfall for Washington, D.C., and Baltimore so far this winter season. Washington has seen only 1.5 inches of snow this winter, while Baltimore has picked up 4.8 inches.

Continued on page 5

Dutch government promoting Aruba as Gateway!



ORANJESTAD -- The "Europe Meets the Americas" international conference is scheduled to be held here in the month of May. Expectations are high for this conference where businesses and investors from both local as well as international concerns will participate to exchange ideas and make valuable agreements. The idea for making Aruba a Gateway to Europe, Latin America and vice versa is an innovative concept that has been well received by local, Dutch and European investors. This appears to be a tremendous concept for Aruba and our people. The Dutch government has grabbed the concept with both hands and has begun promoting the conference on the website for External Economic Affairs.

The conference begins May 5th and runs through to the 8th. Holland and Aruba have organized this conference. The focus of the conference will be on the existing opportunities in the rapidly growing Latin American markets. The conference is the result of a unique protocol agreement between the Dutch

Kingdom and Aruba signed in 2011.

The Europe Meets the Americas conference will focus on the following sectors:

- Sustainable technology (energy, minerals, agriculture, infrastructure and transport)
- Logistics and infrastructure (deposits, distribution, exploration, wharf, airport)
- Financial services and business support
- Water (and hydraulic construction)
- Retail

This mission offers the unique opportunity to, from one location within the Kingdom, to make contact with potential business partners and consumers in Latin America and Aruba. The ambassadors of the Dutch Kingdom and various consuls' general of the region will also be participating at the conference. For different sectors there will also be the individual matchmaking sessions on the program.

Thus far the preparations for the conference are moving along nicely and already a large number of participants have registered.



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2nd Annual Ms. Canada Beach Volleyball fundraising event a huge success



Division A winners Screaming Eagle with Michelle and Jean Begin

Michelle Begin of Canada, who annually winters on Aruba, organized her first fundraising volleyball tournament last year, demonstrating her regular practice of contributing to the community by helping the less fortunate. She selected a number of worthy causes to bring to the attention of visitors and residents with a fun day of the popular pastime. The vivacious lady earned the nickname of "Ms. Canada," among her island friends when competing for the title of La Cabana Carnival Queen years ago.

The first year's fundraiser resulted in \$4500 being raised, of which 100% of the proceeds purchased greatly needed items for Casa Cuna Progreso



Division B winners Little Switzerland

and Ambiente Feliz, foundations dedicated to young children and mentally challenged adults. They are again earmarked to receive the fruits of this year's beach volleyball tournament.

Sunday, March 3 was a full day of exciting, but "congenial" beach volleyball action, noted one spectator. Sixteen competing teams included four from Aruba's police corps. Two final matches for Division A and Division B championships pitted the Screaming Eagles against Police Team 2 and Little Switzerland vs. Limbo Realty Management. Screaming Eagles and Little Switzerland emerged victorious after two hard, fought, sandy battles for first place.

Several island residents and friends from Tropicana Resort contributed to the day as volunteers selling snacks, refreshments, raffle tickets, and conducting a silent auction, to help up the ante of the final donation. Michelle's husband, Jean, proved to be a most talented MC. The founders of Do Good Aruba sold recycled glassware to further raise funds.

Michelle expressed her heartfelt gratitude to all who volunteered their time and efforts towards the day's success, particularly principal sponsors for a second year, Tropical Bottling/Balashi Brewery and Portfolio Printing in Sun Plaza. Gifts for the fundraising raffle were donated by Diamante and Queen's Jewelers.

Rosalie Klein



Interesting change in labor law supports family value

ORANJESTAD -- The Minister of Labor is of the opinion that the father of a newborn also should have two days off in support of the birth of his child. Hence, the change in our labor laws to allow men two days off with pay in support of the mother of his newborn.

Currently the law allows a male employee the right to a very short leave on the day of the birth of his child and on the day that they register the child at the Census Bureau. Many times, the father is expected to return to work after a few hours leaving the mother alone to care for the infant.

In view of the modernization of our world, the government deems it necessary for

men to be present to support the mother of their newborn after the birth of the child. Men should be there during and after the first days preceding the birth of a baby. Hence, the new law will afford all male employees two full days leave with pay. These days may not count as holidays nor may be discounted as such.

This law, according to the government, will add to the protection and security of the family and will contribute to the welfare of family life if men are there to support the mother of their child during those first days after giving birth. This is a tremendous move in the support of family values!

Geert Wilders on al Qaeda death list

Dutch anti-Islam campaigner Geert Wilders is included on an apparent al Qaeda death list, it was reported.

Geert Wilders is in fourth place on the pastiche film poster, which also includes Danish newspaper editor Carsten Juste, responsible for publishing cartoons about Mohammed, and other anti-Islam campaigners. Dutch academic

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who now lives in the US, is in 10th place.

The poster, apparently published on a jihadist website, includes the slogan 'Yes we can', made famous by US president Barack Obama and the text 'a bullet a day can keep the infidels away'. This is a play on the English proverb 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away'.

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Already 1797 entries for the 'Kroonappels' search

Last week for social organizations to enter the competition

WILLEMSTAD -- On the occasion of the upcoming inauguration, the Oranje Fonds organizes a quest for the 'Oranje Fonds Kroonappels'. Social organizations may enter their existing initiatives for this purpose. At this moment already 1797 organizations have entered their initiatives into the databank of www.kroonappels.com. Citizens from all municipalities in the Netherlands and on the islands of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom can vote for the organizations they consider to be the best. This is the very last week that organizations can enter the competition. The public will then have the opportunity to vote.

The three final winning organizations will receive the title of 'Oranje Fonds Kroonappel', and will each win EURO 50.000,- as well as a bronze statue, which will be presented by the new King and Queen at the Noordeinde Palace.

Each year The Oranje Fonds crowns the most successful social organization by handing out 'Appeltjes van Oranje'. On the occasion of the inauguration, a special edition is organized. Throughout the Kingdom, community organizations can enter existing initiatives in one of the three categories. With one more



week to go, it is a pleasant surprise that so many organizations have participated.

There will be enough candidates for the public to choose from.

In Curacao and Bonaire a great many entries have already been registered. Aruba is also doing fine. As to Saba, Statia and especially St Maarten, we would like to call on all social organizations to register as yet this week at www.kroonappels.com.

Ronald van der Giessen, Director of Oranje Fonds: "We are delighted with the enthusiasm all over the Kingdom. By now this campaign already is a great success! We wanted to do something very special for our patron and patroness and at the same time focus their attention on social organizations that

truly meet our goal. We hope that many people will go and vote next week during the voting weekend of March 15, 16 and 17. By doing so they show the new King and Queen the way towards the most precious social organizations in the Kingdom."

In the Youth category organizations can propose existing initiatives that fortify the chances of youth. The Neighborhood category deals with existing initiatives or organizations that work on improving coherence among people in the neighborhoods or barrios. The last category concerns existing organizations whereby volunteers lend a Helping Hand to others in society. Organizations can enter their participation and existing initiatives till March 8 at the latest and have a go at being named a 'Kroonappel' of the Oranje Fonds.

The Oranje Fonds supports social organizations with funds, know-how and contacts. The fund invests each year about 30 million Euros to approximately 8.000 large and small community organizations. The financial means are provided by the Nationale Postcode Loterij, the Lotto and Friends and the business community. The Prince of Orange and Princess Máxima are the patron and patroness of the Fund.

Change of direction on Kerkstraat next to Kinikini Building



ORANJESTAD – The Department of Public Works – DOW – announces to all motorists and the public there will be a change in traffic direction due to construction work on a part of the Avenida Alo Tromp starting today, March 5, 2013. This is the area directly behind the construction of the annex to the courthouse.

Phase I of the construction works encloses the reconstruction of the road and pavement between the Kerkstraat and Hendrikstraat. The parking lot in front of the Kinikini building will be closed completely.

The traffic direction on the Kerkstraat will be changed on the opposite direction. Motorists coming from the

Avenida Alo Tromp going up will use the Kerkstraat. Motorists, who normally use the Kerkstraat next to Manuelito's to travel to Emmastraat, CANNOT use the Kerkstraat; they must go down the Koningsstraat to get into Emmastraat.

The changes will be indicated with barricades and traffic signs. The construction works will last 20 working days. DOW ask all motorists to drive slowly in abovementioned area for there will be men working with machinery alongside the road.

DOW asks everyone for their understanding and apologizes for any inconvenience this may cause.



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Concours Exhibition Waldy Simson In The Hal



The Caribbean Festival for the Arts, Carifesta, is a biannual festival being organized to display works from the entire region. Each Carifesta is hosted by a different Caribbean nation or island. This year's edition will be held in Suriname.

Suriname has responded to this honor by proclaiming the entire year as Carifesta year. Well-known artists of Surinamese origin will host various art-related activities until the opening of the festival. Carifesta 2013 will take place from coming August 16th till 23rd.

Aruban artist Waldy Simson is honored to have been invited to host a solo exhibition at Carifesta 2013. Simson will exhibit his work from July 28th till August 4th in the exhibition room The Hal. The Hal is situated at De Grote Combeweg 45 in Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname.

For the exhibition, "Waldy Simson In The Hal" the artist is presenting a sampling of his paintings, lead glass works, ceramic, and portraiture and silhouettes made by paper cuttings in black and white as well as engravings on glass. Included in the exhibition is a

collection of works presented during a tribute to Nelson Mandela in South Africa. On that occasion, the Aruban artist met personally met Mandela, and Simson entertained him with original music and poetry he had written. This will also be a background for the art works in The Hal.

Waldy Simson is sponsoring a contest with prizes for those who are fans of his work. Answer the four questions below become a winner; some prizes are original artwork by Simson:

1. What is the name of the festival, at which Waldy Simson will soon participate?
2. In which country will the festival be held?
3. What will be the name of the exhibition Waldy Simson will host?
4. What is the period in which Waldy Simson will host the exhibition?

Answers on the question can be sent to waldy-simson@hotmail.com. Contest deadline is March 15. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number to be contacted if you are a winner. Waldy Simson will contact the winners personally after coming March 15th.

Last Days to view photo exposition at Westin Art Gallery



Mosaic of work from each artist



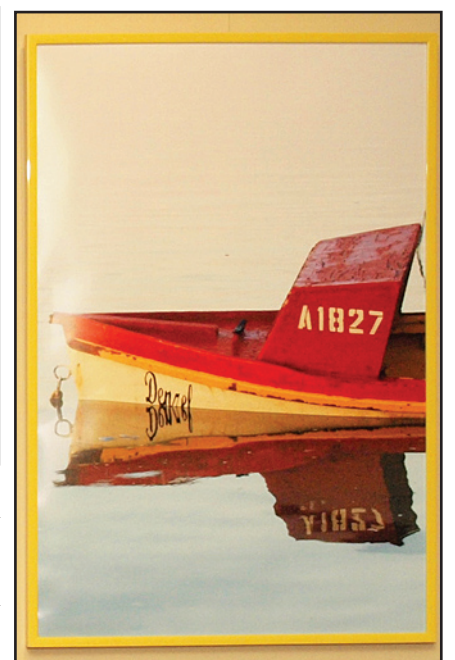
New works on display

The Westin Art Gallery will be opening a new exhibit on Friday, March 8, and there only

two more days to view and purchase the fascinating collection of photographs now on display.

Eight highly respected island photographers have joined together to present unique and imaginative photos, many showcasing the island from a distinctive perspective.

Photographs are all for sale. Artists participating in this exposition are Annemiek van Vliet, Mayo Stoppels, Maria Teresa Martinez, Deisy Gutierrez, Paul van Driel, Armando Goedge-drag and Rosalie



Annemiek van Vliet

Klein and Eduardo Valbuena.

This was the first exhibit of 2012 for the elegant gallery, which is located next to the concierge desk in the main lobby of the Westin Aruba Resort in Palm Beach. The resort management is committed to sharing the work of the local artistic community with island visitors. It is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Anyone interested in purchasing a piece can call Curators on the Go, Michiko or Eduardo, at: 588 2267 or 740-2678 or 742-1987 to discuss a purchase.

Rosalie Klein



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Venezuela probes indigenous leader's murder



Caracas (AFP) - Venezuelan authorities yesterday launched an investigation into the murder of an indigenous leader who fought for the demarcation of native land in the northwest of the country.

Sabino Romero, the 58-year-old leader of the Yukpa ethnic group, was shot several times by two people on a motorcycle in the state of Zulia on Sunday, officials said. His wife was wounded in the attack.

Interior Minister Nestor Reverol said a prosecutor had been designated to investigate the "horrific assassination" and that police crime scene experts were sent to Zulia.

Juan Carlos de la Rosa, leader of the Wainjirawa indigenous organization, said the shooting was committed by "two masked assassins," adding that Romero's wife would be released from the hospital after suffering light wounds.

This type of attack, he said, "has historically taken place against all those who fight for land."

A human rights group, Provea, says on its web page that six Yukpas were murdered by hitmen last year.

The Venezuelan government expropriated more than 15,000 hectares of land in 2011 to hand it over to Yukpas, who have demanded the return of ancestral lands now used by cattle farmers.

Turnout in landmark Kenya poll tops 70%

NAIROBI (AFP) - Kenyans turned out en masse yesterday for the first presidential poll since disputed results triggered a wave of bloodletting five years ago, with all eyes on tallying after a close but peaceful race.

Six policemen were killed in an attack in the coastal city of Mombasa before polling opened but few other incidents were reported during polls seen as key to the regional powerhouse's stability.

The two favourites are Prime Minister Raila Odinga,

who says he was robbed of victory in 2007, and Uhuru Kenyatta, who faces crimes against humanity charges over the violence that killed more than 1,100 people.

Figures released around 10:30 pm and based on some 9% of ballots cast showed Kenyatta with 677,720 votes and Odinga with 481,042.

"All indications are for over 70% turnout," Ahmed Issack Hassan, the head of the Independent Boundaries and Electoral Commission (IEBC), told journalists.

Analysts warned that would suggest around 10 million people cast a ballot and that early results provided insufficient information to identify nationwide trends.

The results from the 2007 poll which Mwai Kibaki won against Odinga sparked a wave of protests, notably because of the lack of transparency in the way the tallying was done at that time.

The IEBC said it had decided to immediately make public figures as and when they are sent in by polling sta-

Winter storm takes aim...

Continued from page 1

The Weather Channel has named the storm Saturn, as part of its winter storm naming system. No other private weather services, or the federal government, are using this name. The Washington Post's Capital Weather Gang has called the storm "Snow-quester" in honor of the federal government's current sequester.

Temperatures will hover in the mid 30s throughout the day Wednesday. And power outages could be rampant as

heavy and wet snow coupled with high winds could bring down electric lines.

For Chicago residents who find themselves digging out cars and walkways, warmer temperatures forecast later in the week give cause for optimism.

In fact, much of the snowfall could begin to melt by Thursday when the weather service predicts temperatures will climb into the 40s where they should stay for much of the weekend.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Spain police smash ring that ran six large brothels

MADRID (AFP) - Spanish police have broken up a prostitution ring that operated six large brothels staffed with about 400 women that had their own automated teller machines to facilitate payments, police said yesterday.

The "macro brothels" were located in Seville, Cadiz, Cordoba and Huelva in the southwestern region of Andalusia and each one generated yearly earnings for the group of 1.25 million euros (\$1.63 million), police said in a statement.

Police detained 36 people, mostly Spanish nationals, across the country and seized nine high-end vehicles, several jewels and luxury watches, a revolver and 250,000 euros (\$325,000) in cash as part of the operation.

Spanish authorities have also frozen assets belonging to the suspects, including 57 homes, 56 cars and a boat, worth over 14 million euros.

"The brothels, with a capacity to exploit around 400 women, had automatic teller machines and their own electronic payment systems linked to companies that belonged to group's networks of firms," the statement said.

The brothels also provided clients with drugs.

The women who worked at the brothels had to turn over part of their earnings to the ring.

They were fined 50 euros for resting without permission and between 150 and 200 euros for leaving the brothels without authorisation.

Queen Elizabeth leaves hospital after 24-hour stay

LONDON (AFP) - Britain's Queen Elizabeth II smiled as she left a London hospital yesterday following a 24-hour stay, having been assessed for gastroenteritis symptoms.

It was the first time in 10 years that the 86-year-old monarch had been admitted to hospital. The illness forced her to call off a visit to Rome this week, which would have been her first overseas trip since October 2011.

The monarch shook hands with a uniformed member of staff on the steps of King Edward VII's Hospital in central London as she left.

The queen was driven away in a luxury Bentley, accompanied by a protection officer and police motorcycle outriders.

Britain's head of state is known for enjoying robust health and rarely misses engagements.

Illustrating her determined spirit, the queen, who first felt unwell on Friday, reportedly presented a long-service medal to a staff member before being driven to hospital on Sunday.

The sovereign, accompanied by her 91-year-old husband Prince Philip, had been due visit Rome on Wednesday and Thursday, but all her engagements for this week have now been called off.

The royals had been scheduled to receive a ceremonial welcome, meet Italian President Giorgio Napolitano and attend a private lunch, before

visiting the Pantheon monument.

No announcement has been made on whether the Rome visit will be rescheduled.

With all engagements called off for the rest of this week, the sovereign's next scheduled engagement is next Monday.

Queen Elizabeth -- who places great importance on her role as head of the 54-member Commonwealth -- is due to attend the annual Commonwealth Observance multi-faith service in Westminster Abbey in central London.

A Buckingham Palace spokeswoman confirmed that the monarch's diary for this week would remain suspended.

"Engagements cancelled or postponed this week remain so. Next week we'll have to see, as she has only just been released from hospital," she said.

She turns 87 in on April 21, while Prince Philip's 92nd birthday is in June.

Journalist fatally shot in northern Mexico

CIUDAD JUAREZ (AFP) - A journalist who ran an on-line publication in northern Mexico has been fatally shot, according to a posting yesterday on the website, which said the man's body was riddled with at least 18 bullets.

The killing late Sunday has led to a decision to shut down the publication, which covered general news in Ojima, a town in the state of Chihuahua which shares a border with the US state of Texas.

"Jaime Guadalupe Gonzalez Dominguez, 38, was shot at least 18 times," the website wrote.

"This very likely is the last news reported by this site," the posting read, adding: "This attack on journalism is a real shame."

Authorities said Gonzalez Dominguez came under fire from several gunmen in broad daylight on a street in Ojima.

Officials said the gunmen made away with a camera he was carrying at the time of the shooting. A female companion with Gonzalez Dominguez was not injured.



WASHINGTON : AFP photo shows Transportation Security Administration (TSA) personnel working at the Ronald Reagan National Airport in Washington, DC, on March 4, 2013. US President Barack Obama warned yesterday that \$85 billion in budget cuts that hit last week would "eventually" cause deep pain, toning down dire forecasts of the impact of the austerity drive. Obama said the automatic, arbitrary budget cuts known as the sequester that hit the economy on Friday after he and Republicans failed to reach a deal on how to cut the deficit, were already costing jobs. The measures could mean long lines at US border posts, reduced military readiness, cuts to special needs education programs, and the curtailment of some emergency medical services, according to White House officials.



CUBA, HAVANA : (L-R) Ivan Marquez, Rodrigo Granda and Andres Paris, of the FARC-EP delegation which is holding peace talks with the government of Colombia President Juan Manuel Santos, and members of the Colombian Congress (foreground), hold a meeting in Havana, on March 4, 2013. Rebels with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Santos administration have been engaged in peace talks in Cuba since November. (AFP PHOTO)

International News

Obama names, top energy, environment and budget officials

WASHINGTON (AFP) - US President Barack Obama on Monday added three new names to his second term cabinet, deciding on a budget chief, energy secretary and head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The president picked top air quality official Gina McCarthy to head the EPA, physicist Ernest Moniz to lead the Energy Department and Sylvia Mathews Burwell to be the new director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

All three nominees must be confirmed by the Senate.

"I can promise you that as soon as the Senate gives them the go-ahead, they are going to hit the ground running and they're going to help make America a stronger and more prosperous country," Obama said.

McCarthy, currently tasked at the EPA with overseeing greenhouse gas regulations, has taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and once worked for defeated Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, when he was governor of Massachusetts.

Moniz also hails from MIT and served as an undersecretary of energy when Democrat Bill Clinton was president.

"They're going to be making sure that we're investing in American energy, that we're doing everything that we can to combat the threat of climate change, that we're going to be creating jobs and economic opportunity in the first place," Obama said at a White House ceremony.

Obama has called on Congress to act to combat climate change and plans to introduce further efficiency standards for cars and push the development of wind, solar and cleaner natural gas energy.

His proposed reforms face a tough ride in Congress, however, and he has warned he will use executive power if lawmakers do not act -- a factor that could complicate the confirmation process for McCarthy.

Burwell was nominated with the White House embroiled in a string of spending and tax showdowns with Republicans, which saw the imposition on Friday of \$85 billion in automatic budget cuts likely to slow economic growth.

She is a former OMB deputy director under Clinton from 1998 to 2001 and served as chief of staff to the secretary of the Treasury during the Clinton administration.

Hostage families urge France to negotiate with Al-Qaeda

RENNES (AFP) - The families of four hostages being held by Al-Qaeda's north African branch on Monday urged the French government to seek negotiations with the militant group in the hope of securing their relatives' release.

The call was issued against a background of fears for the lives of the hostages following the reported killing of two Al-Qaeda-linked leaders by French-backed Chadian troops in Mali over the weekend.

"France must give AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) clear signals of a willingness to negotiate, in liaison with (the hostages' employers) Areva and Vinci," said a statement issued on behalf of the families of four hostages seized at a uranium mine in Niger in 2010.

According to Chadian officials, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the mastermind of an assault on an Algerian gas plant that left 37 foreign hostages dead in January, and AQIM leader Abdelhamid Abou Zeid were killed last week in an assault on rebel bases in the Ifoghas mountains of northern Mali.

France has been extremely guarded about the reports, amid concerns the hostages may have been used as human shields or could be subject to reprisal executions.

The hostages' families have repeatedly expressed concern about the possible consequences of France's military intervention in its former colony but Monday's statement was the first time they have publicly challenged the government's approach.

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Dutch police arrest Romanian woman over art heist

THE HAGUE (AFP) - Dutch police on Monday arrested a young Romanian woman on suspicion of helping smuggle a haul of masterpieces stolen from Rotterdam's Kunsthal museum out of the country.

The 19-year-old woman is the girlfriend of one of three suspects being held in Romania for alleged involvement in October's swiftly-executed theft of works by Picasso, Monet and Gauguin, among others.

The woman arrested in Rotterdam is Natasa Timofei, the girlfriend of suspect Radu Dogaru, police sources in Bucharest told AFP.

Dogaru was allegedly present at a meeting when two of the paintings were offered for sale in Romania, according to Romanian prosecutors.

Two Romanian police and a prosecutor have been sent to the Netherlands to question the

arrested woman, Romanian police told AFP.

The heist gripped the Netherlands and the art world as police apparently struggled to piece the crime together, despite putting 25 officers on the case.

The works stolen include Picasso's "Tete d'Arlequin", Monet's "Waterloo Bridge" and Lucian Freud's "Woman with Eyes Closed".

Experts put the paintings' value at between 100 and 200 million euros (\$130 million to \$260 million).

Police said it appeared the paintings had been taken to a home in Rotterdam immediately after being stolen.

The 19-year-old was one of several people living in the house at the time.

Dutch police also revealed that they had identified two of the suspects arrested in Romania after poring over hours of

video footage of visitors to the Kunsthal.

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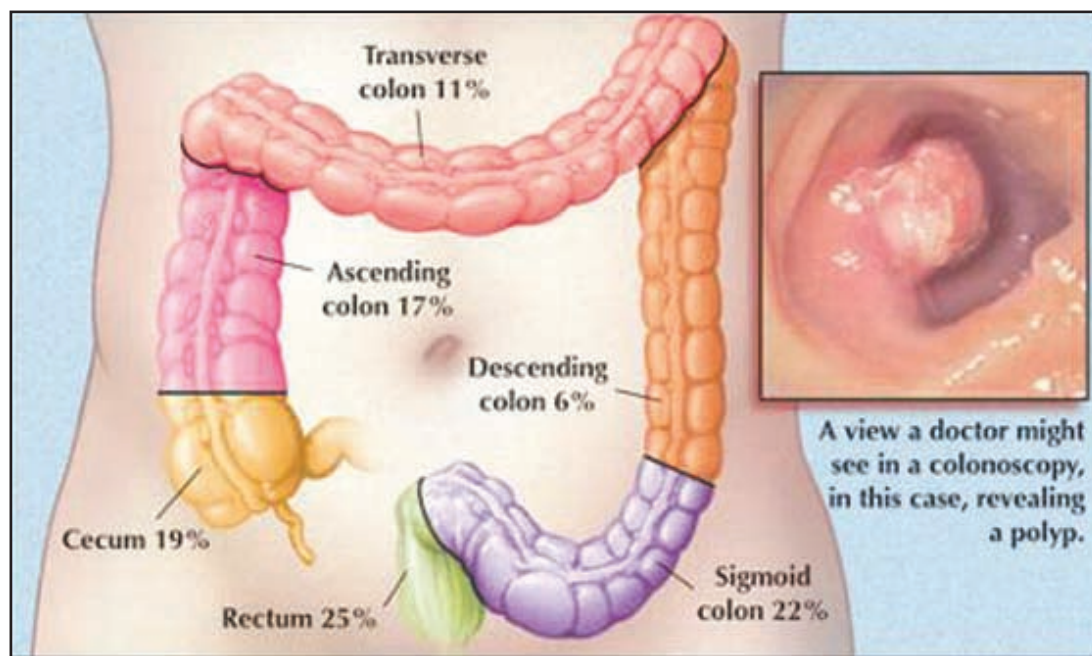
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Health & Living

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month



Cancer can occur anywhere in the colon, so it's important to have screening tests that examine the entire colon. Here, the percentages represent the incidence of colon cancer in the various parts of the colon.

-- **Colorectal cancer** is one of the cause of highest number of cancer deaths in the world. **However, it is also one of the most preventable.** This is because colorectal cancers start as a precancerous growths called polyps or adenomas. If adenoma polyps are detected early and removed, this prevents colorectal cancer from forming. The procedure for removing polyps is a colonoscopy.

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month and a good time to review the recommendations for detecting and preventing this disease. Screening for colorectal cancer is recommended for everyone -- both men and women -- older than age 50. If you have a close relative such as a parent or sibling with a history of colorectal cancer or adenoma polyps, it

is recommended that you start screening at age 40, or 10 years earlier than when your relative was diagnosed, whichever is sooner. For example, if your mother had colon cancer at age 45, you should be screened at age 35.

Colon cancer is cancer of the large intestine (colon), the lower part of your digestive system. **Rectal cancer** is cancer of the last several inches of the colon. *Together, they're often referred to as colorectal cancers.*

Most cases of colon cancer begin as small, noncancerous (benign) clumps of cells called adenomatous polyps. Over time some of these polyps become colon cancers.

Signs and symptoms of colon cancer include:

-A change in your bowel habits, including diarrhea or constipation or a change in

the consistency of your stool
-Rectal bleeding or blood in your stool

-Persistent abdominal discomfort, such as cramps, gas or pain

-A feeling that your bowel doesn't empty completely

-Weakness or fatigue

-Unexplained weight loss

Many people with colon cancer experience no symptoms in the early stages of the disease. When symptoms appear, they'll likely vary, depending on the cancer's size and location in your large intestine.

There are many options available for colorectal cancer screening. Discuss with your doctor which type is best for you. The important thing is to have a screening test performed, as colorectal cancer is both very common and very preventable.

EMBARGO Study links HIV infection to heart attack risk

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Being HIV-positive raises a person's heart attack risk by about 50 percent, said a study released Monday that confirms earlier findings.

The study looked at 82,459 US veterans, the vast majority of them men. It was published in Archives of Internal Medicine, a publication of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

It said that in three age groups, the average incidence of heart attack was consistently and significantly higher for people who are HIV-positive, compared to uninfected veterans.

After adjusting for illness, smoking, alcohol consumption and risk factors such as high

blood pressure and cholesterol, the HIV-positive subjects in the study had a 50 percent higher risk of heart attack than uninfected people.

Several studies have shown that chronic activation of the immune system because of HIV infection prior to anti-retroviral therapy seems to cause inflammation that apparently speeds up the aging process and leaves a person more vulnerable to illnesses associated with growing older.

A study published in July by the JAMA showed that people who are HIV-positive have twice the risk of heart attack or stroke compared to uninfected people. The authors of that study linked this increased risk to inflammation of the arteries.

Working out before bedtime may mean better sleep

-- The best way to ensure a good night's sleep might be breaking a sweat.

Just 10 minutes of exercise a day could make a difference in the duration and quality of sleep, the survey by the non-profit National Sleep Foundation showed.

The National Sleep Foundation's 2013 Sleep in America poll showed that people who reported exercising said they snoozed better than those who didn't work out, even if they got the same amount of shut-eye each night (about six hours and 51 minutes on average).

Other experts says that if other exercise times during the day work better for a person, they should go for it. The most important thing is that they are exercising.



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Sci-Tech Tablets, smartphones drive German IT market higher



HANOVER (AFP) - A booming market for smartphones and tablet computers was expected to drive the German IT sector higher in 2013, although growth was slowing slightly, said industry lobby BITKOM on the eve of the world's top high-tech fair.

BITKOM said it expected sales growth of 1.4 percent in the sector for 2013 to 153.3 billion euros (\$199 billion), a marginal drop on the 2.2-percent gain seen last year.

The publication of the BITKOM forecasts is the traditional first event of the CeBIT high-tech fair, which will be inaugurated by Chancellor Angela Merkel and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk later Monday.

The fair, which runs until March 9, throws open its doors

on Today.

Sales of tablet computers in Germany were expected to

rise by 11 percent to 2.3 billion euros, the lobby forecast. "Sales of tablets should for the first time show the same sales levels as desktop PCs," predicted Kempf.

Cloud computing -- the storing of data remotely -- continues to be a major driver for the German IT sector, although the stellar growth was also expected to slow slightly.

In 2013, firms expect some 4.6 billion euros in sales from cloud computing products, a gain of 53 percent, compared to a rise of 58 percent last year.

Global IT spending was expected to rise by 5.1 percent to

2.7 trillion euros, forecast BITKOM, with India (+13.9 percent), Brazil (+9.6 percent) and China (+8.9 percent) the biggest growth markets.

When the 27 countries of the European Union are lumped together, they represent 21.8 percent of the global

market share.

Around 4,100 exhibitors from some 70 countries are expected in the northern German city of Hanover for the CeBIT fair, including tech giants Microsoft, SAP, IBM and Google.

Smartphone sales to top 900 million in 2013



WASHINGTON (AFP) - Smartphone sales are expected to extend their strong growth trend in 2013 with some 918 million units worldwide, led by gains in big emerging markets China, Brazil and India, a survey showed Monday.

The research firm IDC said 2013 will be the first year smartphones will outsell the more basic feature phones in the mobile market, and will account for 50.1 percent of all mobile phones.

"Smartphone prices have fallen globally, the smartphone strata are wider than ever, and the roll-out of data-centric fourth-generation wireless networks are three factors that have made these 'do-it-all' devices an increasingly attractive option for users," IDC said.

The research firm said that by the end of 2017, 1.5 billion smartphones will be shipped worldwide, over two-thirds of the total mobile phone market.

IDC said the growing mid-

dle classes in China, Brazil, and India are driving up smartphone sales.

China, which supplanted the United States last year as the global leader in smartphone shipments, is expected to see sales of 301 million this year, or 32.8 percent of the global market, ahead of the 137 million in the United States.

"While we don't expect China's smartphone growth to maintain the pace of a runaway train as it has over the last two years, there continue to be big drivers to keep the market growing as it leads the way to ever-lower smartphone prices and the country's transition to 4G networks is only just beginning," said IDC's Melissa Chau.

India is expected to become the number three market for smartphones by 2017, and Brazil will be fourth, as those countries overtake mature markets like Japan and Britain, IDC said.

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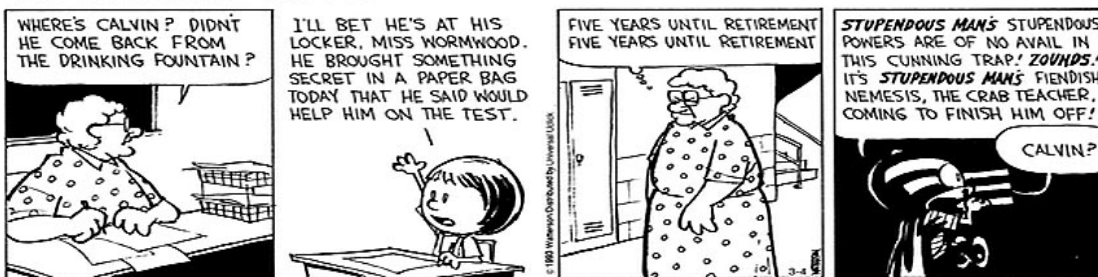
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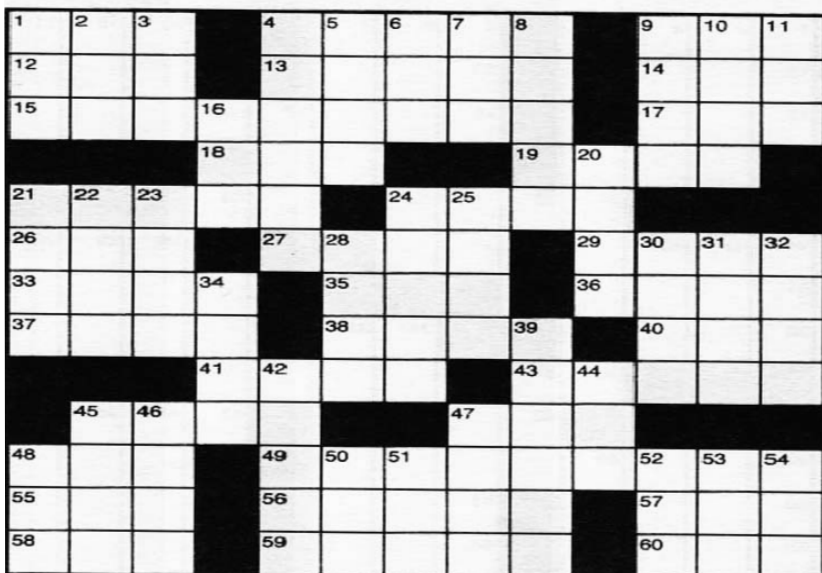
ACROSS

1. Major engineering school (abbr.)
4. Fitzgerald et al.
9. Sis's sib
12. Caviar base
13. San ____
14. Slippery swimmer
15. Disguised
17. Wide shoe width
18. Jar cover
19. Lovers' quarrel
21. Garden shovel
24. William ____ ("Hopalong")
26. Leia's "Star Wars" hero
27. Gather grain
29. "Little Mermaid" prince
33. Barnyard sound
35. Cycle starter
36. Former Cub Sammy
37. Draft status (hyph.)
38. Third letters
40. Total amount
41. Football game shouts
43. Internet necessity
45. Soft mineral
47. "____ Tin Tin"

24. Lung contents
49. Mount Everest's range
55. Not well
56. Secretly wed
57. Poet's prior
58. Feline zodiac sign
59. Car nicks
60. Birthday count

DOWN

1. Modern diagnostic tool (abbr.)
2. Charged atom
3. Sleuth, for short
4. More tense
5. Diva Jenny
6. Luau adornment
7. FBI worker (abbr.)
8. Like chimneys
9. Roast ____
10. Ridge of coral
11. Bullring yell
16. Elderly
20. The ____ of March
21. Scare away
22. Ache's kin
23. Green Gables gal
24. Strips
25. Mayberry boy
28. Engrave on metal
30. Turnpike
31. Rhodes, e.g.
32. Undisturbed
34. Marx or Malden
39. Grins
42. Hurt
44. "Snakes ____ Plane" (2 wds.)
45. Backsplash piece
46. Singer Guthrie
47. Attentive
48. Feel unwell
50. Island (Fr.)
51. Tues. preceder
52. Positive vote
53. Bolivia's neighbor (abbr.)
54. Envision

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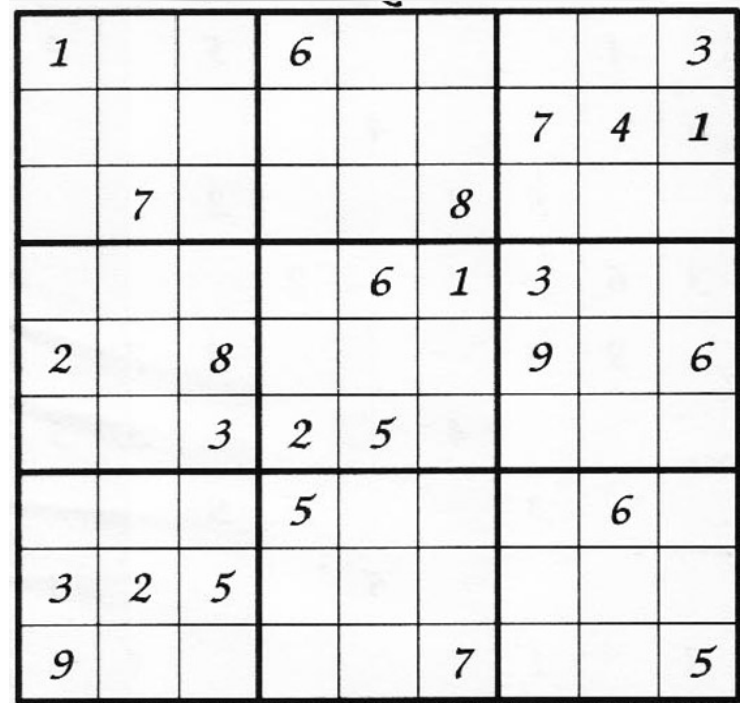
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8	4	9	6	1	5	2	7	
6	9	1	2	5	3	8	7	
4	1	8	6	5	2	7	9	
9	5	6	7	4	8	1	2	
7	2	5	1	9	8	6	3	
2	6	9	8	1	7	4	5	
1	7	4	5	2	6	9	8	
3	8	5	7	9	2	6	1	

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9
A number is Never repeated in a row or column.
In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9

Finance

Mexico's Slim, Gates, Zara chief Ortega world's richest

NEW YORK (AFP) - Mexican tycoon Carlos Slim, Microsoft's Bill Gates and Zara fashion house boss Amancio Ortega of Spain topped the Forbes list of the world's wealthiest billionaires Monday.

Slim, who controls Latin American telecommunications power America Movil and retail/industrial group Grupo Carso, came in first among the mega-rich for the fourth straight year, with a fortune estimated at \$73 billion, up \$4 billion from a year ago.

Microsoft chairman Gates, a perennial top finisher in the list, placed second with \$67 billion, up \$6 billion from 2012, even as he continues to give his fortune away via global charity work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Ortega, whose Inditex fashion group includes the popular Zara chain, vaulted from the fifth position into the third spot. His wealth is now estimated at \$57 billion, rocketing from \$37.5 billion a year ago.

Ortega was the biggest gainer in net worth, while Brazilian metals and oil magnate Eike Batista notched the biggest decline, with a \$19.4 billion drop in his fortune. Batista slipped from seventh to 100th.

Slim and Gates were also in the top two spots last year.

After a year in which the "Occupy Wall Street" movement decried the growing wealth of the so-called "One Percent" at the expense of the many, the Forbes annual list once again pointed to more billionaires amassing more money.

The list now boasts 1,426 names, a record, including 210 new members. The aggregate net worth of the group comes in a \$5.4 trillion, up from \$4.6 trillion last year, according to Forbes.

There was significant jump in women billionaires, with 138 in total, an increase of 34.

The US led the list with 442 tycoons, followed by China with 122, Russia with 110 and Germany with 58.

Forbes noted that rebounding equity markets and stronger consumer brands "drove a huge" number of newcomers, including



Diesel jeans mogul Renzo Rosso, US retailer Bruce Nordstrom and US designer Tory Burch.

Warren Buffett, chief of US conglomerate Berkshire Hathaway, ranked fourth with \$53.5 billion, and Larry Ellison, chief executive of US technology company Oracle, came in fifth with \$43 billion.

Moving up into a tie for the sixth spot were brothers

Charles and David Koch, with \$34 billion each, fortunes built on their US oil refining, pulp and paper and chemicals empire Koch Industries.

Asia's richest man, Li Ka-shing, came in eighth with \$31 billion. He owes to fortune to his sprawling transportation, trading and energy businesses.

French luxury tycoons rounded out the top 10.

Liliane Bettencourt and family, whose wealth stems from the L'Oreal cosmetics and beauty empire, rose to ninth with \$30 billion, while Bernard Arnault, who presides over fashion and luxury products group LVMH, rated 10th on the list, with \$29 billion. Arnault was fourth last year with \$41 billion.

Members of the Walton family, the dynasty behind retailer Walmart, dominated the list of billionaires just outside the top 10.

Christy Walton and family rated 11th with \$28.2 billion, Jim Walton rated 14th with \$26.7 billion, Alice Walton placed 16th with \$26.3 billion and S. Robson Walton rated 17th with \$26.1 billion. Together, the family's riches came to \$107.3 billion, or more than number-one Slim.

Troubled Sony selling shares in social networking firm

TOKYO (AFP) - Sony on Monday announced plans to sell its entire holding in social networking firm DeNA, as the Japanese electronics giant offloads assets to help repair its tattered balance sheet.

The company said it would log a gain of about 40.9 billion yen (\$437 million) from the sale to Japan's top brokerage house Nomura Holdings. It did not immediately disclose the sale price.

Last week, Sony said it had sold one of its main buildings in Tokyo for \$1.2 billion, as the maker of Bravia television and PlayStation game consoles eyes a net profit for the fiscal year to March, its first in four years.

Since January, Sony has also said it would sell its US headquarters in Manhattan for more than \$1.0 billion and book a \$1.2 billion gain from selling part of an online medical services unit.

The company has launched a massive corporate overhaul

that includes thousands of job cuts, the sale of a chemical division and an investment in Olympus to tap the camera and medical equipment maker's strong foothold in the global market for endoscopes.

Last month, Sony announced it would launch its PlayStation 4 system as it faces increasing competition from cheap -- or sometimes free -- downloadable video games for smartphones and tablets.

Shares in the firm, which last year fell below 1,000 yen for the first time since the era of the Walkman, closed up 3.45 percent at 1,438 yen in Tokyo trading.

Japan's electronics sector, including Sony rivals Panasonic and Sharp, has suffered myriad problems including a strong yen, slowing demand in key export markets, fierce competition especially in the struggling TV division and strategic mistakes that left its finances in ruins.



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Oil prices hit new lows

LONDON (AFP) - Oil prices dropped to fresh multi-week low points on Monday, weighed down by economic strains in China and the United States, the world's two-biggest crude consuming countries, analysts said.

Brent North Sea crude for delivery in April reached \$109.61 a barrel -- the lowest point for six weeks. In later

London trading, it stood at \$110.04, a loss of 36 cents compared with Friday's closing level.

On Monday, New York's main contract, light sweet crude for April, slid to a two-month trough of \$89.51 a barrel. It later traded at \$89.85, down 83 cents compared with Friday.

Curbing executive pay in Europe

PARIS (AFP) - This is a summary of some efforts in Europe to cut down on "golden parachutes" and very high remuneration, after Swiss voters backed moves to curb executive pay in a referendum.

On Monday, the European Union's executive commission welcomed the Swiss vote as "very positive", and highlighted the 27-member EU's plans for legislation this year to give shareholders more control over corporate pay.

- BRITAIN: The government wants to limit excessive salaries for executives in companies which are underperforming, without intervening directly.

It thus announced last year its intention to give more power to shareholders to contest top executives' pay and wants, under legislation now under examination in parliament, to force companies to exercise more transparency when it comes to executive pay.

- FRANCE: Golden parachutes are not forbidden but are subject to stiff social charges and restrictions. The government recently raised taxes on such measures.

Compensation is closely regulated and limited in general to a maximum of two years of the executive's highest pay.

Pay received by the heads of state-owned companies was capped in mid 2012.

- GERMANY: A 2009 law controls the pay of those who sit on a company's board of directors, and the government said the result of the Swiss referendum was "interesting."

- ITALY: The idea of attacking golden parachutes or reducing remuneration in the private sector has not gained much traction until now.

- THE NETHERLANDS: The Dutch government is currently working on a draft law which would limit golden parachutes to a maximum of 75,000 euros. The Hague hopes that the law will take effect on July 1, 2014, according to a spokesman for the social and employment ministry.

Under Swedish rules, heads of enterprises capitalised at more than 500 billion kronor must also receive part of their bonus in the form of shares or other instruments linked to the performance of their company.

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Record 259 nominees for 2013 Nobel Peace Prize



Malala Yousafzai, the shot Pakistani schoolgirl-turned-icon of Taliban resistance.

OSLO (AFP) - A record 259 nominees are in the running for this year's Nobel Peace Prize -- 209 individuals and 50 organisations -- with the laureate to be announced in October, the Nobel Institute said on Monday.

The list is known to include Malala Yousafzai, the shot Pakistani schoolgirl-turned-icon of Taliban resistance, ex-Eastern bloc activists, and former US president Bill Clinton.

"The trend is upward, not every year but almost," the head of the Nobel Institute,

Geir Lundestad, said.

"This reflects a growing interest for the prize. The nominations come from the entire world," he said.

The previous record dates back to 2011 when 241 candidates were nominated.

The list of nominees is kept secret for 50 years.

But thousands of people are eligible to nominate candidates -- including former laureates, members of parliament and government around the world, some university professors, and members of certain international organisations --

and they can reveal the names they have put forward.

As a result, it is known that Malala and Clinton are nominated, as well as Russian human rights organisation Memorial and Myanmar's reformist President Thein Sein.

The deadline to submit nominations closed on February 1.

The five-member Norwegian Nobel Committee will announce its choice in early October, and the prize will be awarded, as tradition dictates, on December 10, the anniversary of the death in 1896 of the Nobel Prizes' founder, philanthropist Alfred Nobel.

Last year, the prestigious honour went to the European Union, a highly controversial choice as the bloc struggles through its worst crisis since its creation.

In 2009, the prize also made waves when US President Barack Obama received the nod just months after he took office and as the US was fighting two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Cardinals begin pre-conclave talks in Vatican



VATICAN CITY (AFP) - Catholic cardinals began talks on Monday ahead of a conclave to elect a new pope after Benedict XVI's resignation, as an absent British cardinal admitted to sexual misconduct with priests.

The Vatican meetings will set the date for the start of the conclave this month and help identify candidates among the cardinals to be the next leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics.

"We're going to take as much time as we need to think about what sort of pope the Church needs now," French cardinal Andre Vingt-Trois told reporters as he arrived for Monday's meetings.

"I'd be keen to have a polyglot, a man of faith, a man of

dialogue... The new pope will certainly have to confront problems within the Curia," the government of the Catholic Church, he said.

Benedict's eight-year pontificate was often overshadowed by Vatican intrigue and scandals in Europe and North America over sexual abuse by paedophile priests going back decades and the cover-up of those crimes by senior prelates.

A total of 115 "cardinal electors" -- cardinals aged under 80 -- are expected at the conclave after Britain's Keith O'Brien opted out and an Indonesian cardinal said he was too sick to attend.

The field for next pope remains wide open after Benedict became only the second

pontiff to step down by choice in the Church's 2,000-year history and the first to do so since the Middle Ages.

The Vatican says it expects a new pope by Easter, the most important date in the Christian calendar which this year falls on March 31.

Vatican observers say there are possible candidates from every corner of the world and from both progressive and traditionalist wings of the Church, which is facing challenges on many levels.

Church leaders are also concerned about issues like priestly celibacy, treatment of gays, attitudes towards divorcees, the Catholic stance on contraception as well as inter-religious dialogue, particularly with Islam.

Benedict's effort to revive faith amid rising secularism is also seen as crucial.

The profile of an ideal candidate for pope is beginning to come into focus as cardinals have their say -- many would prefer a relatively youthful, pastoral figure who can help foster spiritual renewal, particularly among young people.



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Fake bishop tries to sneak into Vatican meeting

VATICAN CITY (AFP) - An Italian man dressed up in fake ecclesiastical robes was escorted out of a meeting of Catholic cardinals by Swiss Guards on Monday after trying to sneak into the closed-door Vatican meeting.

The man had told reporters that his name was "Basilius" and that he was a member of the "Italian Orthodox Church", which does not exist.

Before he was discovered, the "bishop" told reporters that Catholic bishops had "made a mistake by moving priests" who were accused of paedophilia around different parishes.

He was wearing a purple scarf around his waist that was similar to the sashes worn by senior Catholic prelates and he shook hands and chatted with priests and cardinals arriving at the meeting.

China grave-robbers sold dead brides



BEIJING (AFP) - Four people have been jailed in China for digging up corpses to sell as brides for traditional "ghost marriages" -- where dead single men are buried with a wife for the afterlife -- local reports said.

Marriage is an important part of Chinese society and, while the practice is increasingly rare, it is still kept up by some families whose young adult sons pass away before

having a chance to wed.

Normally it is agreed between the families of the dead, but the Xian Evening News said that the group "stole female corpses and after cleaning them, fabricated medical files for the deceased and sold them for a high price".

A court in the northern province of Shaanxi had in recent days sentenced the four to terms between 28 and 32 months, it said, adding they "took advantage" of the "bad tradition" of ghost marriages in parts of Shaanxi and neighbouring Shanxi province.

The deceased couples are typically buried side by side after a wedding ceremony of sorts.

Citing the court, the report said the gang made a total of 240,000 yuan (\$39,000) from the sales of 10 corpses.



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5 Burgers Aruba: Now your best breakfast bargain!



A favorite stop for a great burger for lunch or dinner has just expanded their hours and menu to offer some of the best breakfast bargains to be found in Palm Beach. Owners Aaron and Rosie Walisever are living their dream: a home on paradise while welcoming all and sundry to their proud undertaking, 5 Burgers Aruba. The couple's fanatical dedication to giving their customers what they really want has resulted in a unique menu from an inter-

nationally known franchise with a "5", which now includes breakfast.

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression," believes Aaron. Upon entering 5 Burgers Aruba in The Village Mall in Palm Beach, one is struck by utterly spotless surroundings and a smiling, friendly, attentive service crew. Of course, the main item on the menu is burgers-the way they were meant to be, thick and juicy,

made fresh daily and 100% pure beef, the kind that made the hamburger a traditional American treat.

However, beginning at 7 a.m., patrons can now order 2 eggs any style, (omelets with 3 fillings are \$7.99) toast and coffee with unlimited refills for the special introductory price of only \$4.49, (\$5.48 with bacon) or All-you-can-eat pancakes, for \$6.99, again, with free refills on fresh coffee. Breakfast is served until 11 a.m. Famous for their fries made from fresh potatoes, Aaron has been working for months on devising the most irresistible home fries recipe, chunky and tender with skins still on; after much testing and tasting, he got the thumbs up from his harshest critic, Rosie; so this is another treat you have to try.

A glance at their burger menu will certainly tempt you to return for lunch or dinner, to sample their famous specialty items such as the Gouda, Farmer's or Man Burger (al-



most 12 ounces of choice beef), and a Western Burger with Aarons' secret-recipe crispy onion rings. All of these can be personalized with an incredible array of toppings, (mushrooms, jala-peño peppers, bacon, cheese, lettuce, tomato...whatever, the list goes on) at absolutely no extra cost.

5 Burger portions are ENORMOUS! Aaron suggests that even their small serving of fries is enough to be shared by

two. He was very amused to watch a famous French chef demonstrating the best way to make fried potatoes on a gourmet cooking show and could only comment "He stole my recipe!"

Try them the English way-with vinegar, and you'll wonder how you ever ate fries without it. This same 5-star chef also swears by Gouda as the best topping for the ideal gourmet cheeseburger.

5 Burgers is now open early until 10-ish at night; delivery is available to both the high-rise and low-rise hotel and beach district at now extra cost for orders over \$50. Enjoy a great lunch without ever leaving the beach by calling 586-3904. However, we suggest you stop by and enjoy their authentic, heartfelt hospitality; it is not unusual for either owner to sit and chat, sharing their knowledge of the island while making sure patrons are happy with their meal.

Sport

Football: Form counts for nothing in United game -- Mourinho



MANCHESTER (AFP) - Real Madrid manager Jose Mourinho says pre-game form can be discounted ahead of his side's mouth-watering Champions League showdown with Manchester United today.

Both teams approach the concluding leg of the last 16 tie at Old Trafford buoyed by excellent recent results.

United have established a huge lead over Manchester City at the top of the Premier League and are also in the FA Cup quarter-finals, while Madrid go into the game following impressive back-to-back wins over old foes Barcelona.

United claimed a precious away goal in the 1-1 first-leg draw in Madrid three weeks ago, but Mourinho says it is impossible to pinpoint the factors that will decide the outcome of the tie.

"They (United) are on a fantastic run, better than ever this season -- reaching the FA Cup quarter-finals, winning the Premier (League) already in March. They don't lose a match in months," he said.

"We're also in good form in 2013. But that's the \$1 million

question: who knows what is going to make the difference?"

"Nobody knows, and tomorrow (Today) the world will stop to watch this tie. It looks like a final. Let's see which teams arrive at Wembley (for the final), but I doubt the expectation can be bigger than for this one."

Mourinho has included Iker Casillas in his squad despite the Spain goalkeeper being sidelined with a broken hand, but the Madrid manager confirmed that he would not be able to feature.

"Everyone's fit and ready to play, with the exception of Iker Casillas," he said at Monday's pre-game press conference.

Mourinho rose to prominence in England after leading Porto to a shock victory over United in the Champions League in 2004, celebrating the decisive goal at Old Trafford with an impromptu sprint down the touchline.

The former Chelsea manager says that although he is now more adept at controlling his emotions, the feelings provoked by what happens on the pitch remain as intense.

"That match was my first season playing Champions League football," he said.

"Now I have more than 100 matches and I think I can control my emotions in a different

way. If I lose tomorrow, I don't cry, and if I win, I don't run 100 metres, for sure.

"But the happiness and the sadness -- sleep well, sleep not so well, laugh a lot in the plane, or pretend I'm sleeping -- that's the same story."

Mourinho, 50, has been tipped as a potential successor to 71-year-old United manager Alex Ferguson and admits he hopes to still be managing when he reaches the Scot's age.

"I can imagine, yes. Because I think this is the kind of job where, the older you are, the better you are, because it's a job where the experiences that you live and the thoughts you give to those experiences make you better," he said.

"So yes, I imagine, and I would love that God gives me health so I can do it. And Sir Alex is unique. I don't have any words that can add to what everybody thinks about him and the respect he deserves from everyone."

Ferguson, meanwhile, was evasive when asked to assess Mourinho's merits as a candidate to succeed him.

"I get this question all the time and it's a question I can't answer because I'm still the manager here, and I hope I'm the manager tomorrow," he said at his own press conference.

Football: Maradona dream - to coach Barca

MADRID (AFP) - Argentine legend and former Barcelona star Diego Maradona has revealed he dreams of coaching his compatriot Lionel Messi at the Catalan club.

"My little dream would be one day to coach Leo at Barca," Maradona told Marca in an interview published Monday.

Maradona, world champion in 1986, has already coached Messi during a two-year spell in charge of the national side culminating in a disappointing 2010 World Cup.

The 52-year-old meanwhile defended Messi, who has come in for some rare criticism in recent games - including a Champions League loss at AC Milan and a pair of reverses to Real Madrid.

"I don't think you have the right to 'kill' Messi on the basis of two poor games given all his goals across the season," said Maradona.

Although Barca have a healthy lead atop La Liga,

their 2-0 loss to the Milanese threatens to end this season's European ambitions and Maradona said he regretted their mini slump and also the departure of Pep Guardiola as coach at the end of last season.

"Barca have lost it totally with his departure. Instead of three touches of the ball and then a shot on goal they are now doing something else. They indulge in senseless touches," opined Maradona, who himself had mixed fortunes in Catalonia.

He won a Spanish Cup but stayed only for two injury-hit seasons before going on to find greater success and acclaim with Napoli.

Maradona said in his view Barca appeared "tired," perhaps because of poor preparation for the season.

"Barca had a very bad pre-season. They went off to play friendlies for which they were paid a small fortune in China, Malaysia, or wherever," he sniffed.



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FHockey: Pakistan to play in India after 7 yrs

LAHORE (AFP) - Pakistan's hockey team will tour India next month after a nod from New Delhi for the first five-match series between the South Asian rivals in nearly seven years, official said Monday.

The tour is expected to improve sporting relations between both nations following the Pakistan cricket team's India visit in December -- the first series after a gap of five years.

India had suspended all sporting ties with arch-rival Pakistan after the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai blamed on Pakistan-based militants, which left 166 people dead.

Officials from Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) and Hockey India met on the sidelines of an Asian Hockey Federation meeting in Malaysia last week before finalising the tour.

PHF secretary Asif Bajwa hailed the revival of the series as "a big step".

"It will help field hockey of both countries and will give fans of both countries a good opportunity to witness exciting hockey," he told a press conference.

Pakistan will cross the border next month and play

matches in the cities of Ranchi, Lucknow, Delhi, Mohali and Jalandhar between April 5-15.

The Indian team will pay a return visit and play five matches in Lahore, Faisalabad, Karachi and Sialkot from April 23, said Bajwa.

The two teams are also due to face each other in the Azlan Shah hockey tournament to be played in the Malaysian city of Ipoh from March 9-16.

Pakistan and India last played a bilateral hockey series in 2006 -- three matches in each country. Pakistan won three and lost one while the remaining two were drawn.

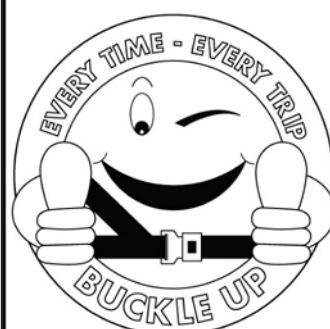
Both countries have won 11 Olympic hockey titles between them and ruled the Games arena for decades, with India winning eight and Pakistan three.

But both have slumped at the international level in the last few years as Pakistan finished a poor seventh at the London Olympics last year where India ended at their worst 12th and last.

India's snooker team is also due to visit Karachi to play a series from March 7-10.

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Auto Racing: US gun lobby to sponsor NASCAR race

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The National Rifle Association (NRA), the largest American gun lobbyist group, will sponsor the top-flight US stock car series race in Texas on April 13, event organizers announced on Monday.

The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) NRA 500 will be staged at the 1.5-mile Texas Motor Speedway oval in Fort Worth, said Eddie Gossage, president of the track that boasts more than 190,000 seats.

NASCAR backed the NRA sponsorship move. Tracks make sponsorship deals, but NASCAR has final approval



of such contracts as a sanctioning body.

The NRA charm offensive announcement came eight days after Michael Waltrip drove in NASCAR's biggest race, the season-opening Daytona 500, in a Toyota painted to support a Sandy Hook victims relief fund. Swan Racing's car will have a new sponsor on the car for the Texas event after the one-race Daytona deal.

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NFL: Flacco inks record deal after Super Bowl win



BALTIMORE (AFP) - Baltimore Ravens quarterback Joe Flacco signed the richest contract in National Football League history Monday, a six-year deal worth \$120.6 million to stay with the Super Bowl champions.

Flacco's deal, which includes \$52 million in guaranteed payouts, reportedly will pay him nearly \$170,000 a day in the NFL season for the next six campaigns after he completed his rookie contract, worth \$6.76 million, this past

season.

Flacco, the first quarterback in NFL history with playoff triumphs in each of his first five seasons, takes on the mantle of the NFL's highest-paid player from New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees, who averages \$20 million a season.

The contract, according to the Baltimore Sun, was structured so the Ravens would lose only \$6.8 million off this year's cap under the deal, allowing them more room to seek free agent talent.

NBA: Thunder sweep season series from Clippers

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - The Oklahoma City Thunder's playoff push gathered steam on Sunday with a 108-104 NBA victory over the Los Angeles Clippers behind a 35-point performance from Kevin Durant.

Russell Westbrook finished with 29 points, eight rebounds and 10 assists for the Thunder, who swept the season series against the Clippers.

Forward Serge Ibaka had a strong game for the Thunder as he manhandled Clippers star Blake Griffin several times under the basket and finished with 16 points and two blocks in front of a crowd of 19,371.

Ibaka took his aggressive play too far at one point and was nearly ejected after he delivered a hard slap to Griffin's groin late in the game, a move which earned him a foul.

The Clippers were the hotter of the teams heading into Sunday's crucial matchup as they had won four in a row and eight of their last nine.

But Westbrook's baseline jumper with 26 seconds left in the fourth quarter gave Oklahoma City some much needed breathing room in a contest that was close to the final buzzer.

The second place Thunder improved to 43-16 on the season and now lead the third place Clippers (43-19) by one and a half games in the Western Conference standings.

Chris Paul had 26 points, eight assists and pulled down six rebounds, Griffin had 20 points and nine rebounds and Jamal Crawford scored 20 in the loss.

The Thunder completed a season sweep over the Clippers that included winning 117-111 in over-time on November 21 in Oklahoma City and by 12 points on January 22 in Los Angeles.

Tennis: Hingis, Long among five elected to Hall of Fame

NEWPORT (AFP) - Former World No. 1 Martina Hingis and Australian legend Thelma Coyne Long were among five people named Monday as 2013 inductees into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

Two ATP co-founders, Americans Cliff Drysdale and Charlie Pasarell, and Romanian star Ion Tiriac, were also elected to the sporting shrine by a selection panel. A person needs 75 percent support from the group for election.

All five will be enshrined on July 13 during ceremonies at the ATP Hall of Fame Championships grass-court event, joining 224 previous honorees from 19 nations.

Retired Swiss star Hingis, 32, topped the rankings for 209 weeks and won 43 career

WTA titles and five Grand Slam singles crowns, including Wimbledon, US and Australian Open titles in 1997 and the 1998 and 1999 Australian Opens.

Hingis, who went 548-133 in WTA singles matches, also won nine Grand Slam women's doubles titles and one mixed doubles title. She retired in 2003 at age 22 due to injury, made a comeback in 2006 and won three titles before retiring for good in 2007. Long, 94, played from 1935 to 1958. She won the 1952 and 1954 Australian Open women's singles titles and was a runner-up in the event four other times. In 1952 she also won women's and mixed doubles titles at the Australian event.

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Baseball: Cuba, Japan reach WBC second round



Cuba's Jose Abreu (R) comes into home after hitting a grand slam as his teammate Yasmany Tomas (L) congratulates him



Japan Celebrating their win

FUKUOKA (AFP) - Cuba overwhelmed China 12-0 to reach the World Baseball Classic second round alongside defending champions Japan Monday, as South Korea earned their first win with a 6-0 romp against Australia.

Cuba's thrashing of China was their second win in four-team Pool A, putting them into round two along with co-hosts Japan, who won the tournament's first two editions and started their campaign by beating Brazil and China.

But the results eliminated

both the Chinese and the Brazilians with a game each still to play after both teams started the competition with two defeats.

"Our aim is to clinch the pool, so we are pleased to win the first two games. That's the reason we flew from Cuba to Japan," said Cuban head coach Victor Mesa.

"We have some little problems, but overall we won two straight games. At the same time, I don't feel 100 percent comfortable. I feel we are lacking something."

In round two, which starts in Tokyo on Friday, Cuba and Japan will join two teams from Pool B, hosted and currently led by Taiwan with two wins, with the Netherlands and South Korea on 1-1 and Australia on 0-2.

The Koreans, who opened with a surprising 5-0 defeat to the Netherlands in Taichung, central Taiwan, on Saturday, evened the win-loss record by beating Australia 6-0 to keep their hopes alive.

The 2009 finalists took a 3-0 lead in the first inning when outfielder Kim Hyun-Soo hit a timely single for two runs, and Son Ah-Seop added another run by hitting a grounder to be out in the first inning.

It was enough for the Koreans as Australia had to wait until the fourth inning for their first hit by Mike Walker, while Korean starting pitcher Song Seung gave only two hits in four innings.

In Monday's game at Japan's Fukuoka Dome, fourth batter Frederich Cepeda fired a triple to open the scoring for Cuba in the first inning before hitting a grounder to the third to go out, with Jose Fernandez still on second base.

Jose Abreu then hit a double to the right field which helped Fernandez back home and extended Cuba's lead to 2-0 in the third inning.

Alexei Bell made a two-run home run before Alfredo Despaigne struck a double for two runs, taking the score to 6-0 and making Cuba almost certain of victory in the fourth inning.

The Cubans then hammered their win home with Fernandez hitting a single for two runs and Abreu belting a grand slam to take it to 12-0.

China's head coach John McLaren said: "Cuba's so good, so powerful and we had limited pitching for today. Playing three games in a row, we had to spread our pitching out. We're in good shape for tomorrow night against Brazil."

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